



# The ISC Newsletter

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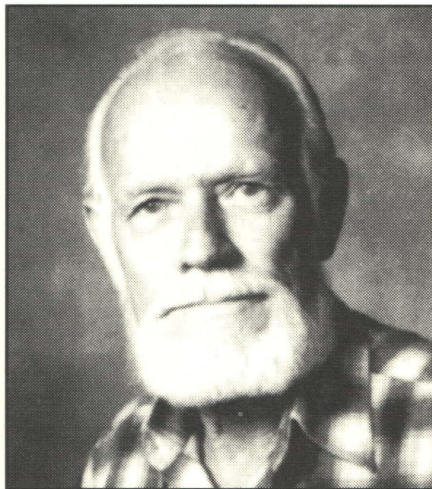
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## INTERVIEW BOB TITMUS

### BIGFOOT'S MOST PERSISTENT HUNTER TALKS OF HIS 40-YEAR SEARCH



Bob Titmus

*Bob Titmus has been the most experienced tracker and hunter to have sought field evidence for the Sasquatch (Bigfoot). Beginning in 1958, much of his life was dedicated to this pursuit, and he found and cast more supposed Sasquatch tracks than any other investigator. His efforts included extensive fieldwork in both Western Canada and the U.S. Pacific Northwest. His persistent but quiet pursuit of the evidence, and his avoidance of publicity and controversy, led to his being elected an Honorary Member of the Society in 1987.*

*Shortly before his recent death, and although not well and very weak, Mr. Titmus consented to being interviewed in his home in Harrison Hot Springs, British Columbia, by the Editor of The ISC Newsletter, J. Richard Greenwell. The opinions expressed below, as with all interviewees, were his own, and do not reflect any positions or policies of the International Society of Cryptozoology.*

**Greenwell:** I'd like to ask you first about your early involvement with Bigfoot in-

vestigations in the late 1950's. How did it come about?

**Titmus:** Well, Jerry Crew came to see me at my taxidermy studio in Redding. He had a cut-out in the shape of a giant foot...a big piece of brown paper. He wanted to know if it could have been a bear track. He said there were tracks like that all over this construction site where he was working, on a logging road that they were building above Bluff Creek. This was in the Six Rivers National Forest, in Northern California.

**Greenwell:** And when was this exactly?

**Titmus:** It was in September of 1958. I assured him that what I was looking at was not the outline of a bear track. But I told him that I'd have to see more detail than what I was looking at, this tracing, in order to determine what it might be. So I gave Jerry some plaster, taught him how to mix it, and told him to make a cast of a track the next time they found fresh ones on the logging road. I also told him to phone me, and I would go up there and have a look at them myself, right on the ground.

**Greenwell:** Where were you living at the time?

**Titmus:** I was between Redding and Anderson, in Northern California. About 6 miles (10km) south of Redding. So, after a couple of weeks or something like that, Jerry called and said there were fresh tracks again all over the project that they were working on up there. He asked me if I could go up. And I did. I had a friend with me from Seattle, Al Corbett, another taxidermist who'd come down to go deer hunting with me. So, the two of us went up to Jerry's place in Salyer, which was about 50 miles (80km) from where the



tracks were.

When we got there, he showed us the one cast that I'd asked him to make, and when I examined it I assured him that it wasn't a bear track. You see, I'd hunted and tracked many black bears and brown bears...Kodiak bears, and the big brown bears up in Alaska. I've hunted all my life.

Greenwell: Would you say that you know the track of just about every wild animal in Western North America?

Titmus: I do, yes. So, Jerry had said he'd take us up to the site, where the tracks were. It was way back in the forest, about 22 miles (35km) from the nearest highway. But after I'd assured him that these tracks were not bear tracks, I suggested to him that they were probably fake tracks. That the other workers there at the site had been playing pranks on one another. Well, he was dead certain they weren't. He said there were just too many of these tracks, that they were sunk down too deep into the ground, and that sort of thing. So, instead of taking us up there, Jerry went into Eureka, and he took that one cast to the newspapers. And that's where it hit the papers.

Greenwell: And that's the famous photo we've all seen?

Titmus: Yes, that got on the wire services, and it appeared in papers all over the country. Anyway, Al and myself took the little map Jerry had drawn for us, and we went up to Bluff Creek ourselves. We found the tracks up there, just as he said we would. And we tracked the thing down the road, off the road, across the creek, and we backtracked it up the mountain-side.

Greenwell: How far was all that?

Titmus: How far did we track it? Maybe all told about 3,000 feet (900m). Both of us were completely convinced by then that this was not a hoax, and, also, that this certainly was no animal that we were familiar with.

Greenwell: What did you think it could possibly be, then?

Titmus: I didn't know. I simply didn't know. And at that time I had totally forgotten that I myself had seen such a creature in 1942 up in Alaska. I had been very successful in putting that sighting out of my mind, because I didn't believe in what I was looking at when I saw it.

Greenwell: Could we digress a bit, and have you give a brief narrative of that event?

Titmus: Well, I was aboard a boat that the government had requisitioned during the war to transport workers up to Alaska. I was hired by a construction firm called E.W. Elliot, and I was part of the first construction crew that had shipped out to build the Alaska highway. We left Seattle in early spring. We stopped off in Prince Rupert and worked there for a couple of months, and then we went on further north to Alaska.

Greenwell: So this was before you served in the U.S. Marine Corps in the Pacific?

Titmus: Yes, that was later. We were going up the coast, and a group of us were up in the forward lounge playing poker. At one point, at about 9:30 in the evening, I went up on deck, and was standing there when I noticed on the beach, about 100 feet (30m) from me...the first thing I noticed was how terribly narrow the strait was, and how close the beach was. I turned around, and the beach on the other side was just as close. It was a very narrow spot there; it was called Wrangel Narrows, and boy it was narrow. And the tide was flowing out, and we were almost standing still, bucking this outgoing tide.

And then — it was still light because it was in June — I noticed on the beach, just standing looking at our boat, this big giant of a...creature, built like a big, overly-muscled man. But completely covered with hair. It's obvious to me now that it was a Bigfoot or Sasquatch. But, of course, at that time I knew that no such animal existed, so I looked away at least three times, blinking my eyes and looking back, thinking it would be gone.

Greenwell: It was looking at you?

Titmus: Well, looking at the boat I presume. I later estimated that I observed the thing for about 1 minute and 15 seconds. After just standing there, it walked out and around a rock, turned again, went up a little gully, and disappeared into the timber. So, I had the opportunity to study the front of it, and when it walked out and turned to its left, I saw the right side of it — and I could see the soles of its feet as it walked — and as it turned a little more I could see its back very clearly. When it completed the turn, its left was exposed to me, so I saw it completely from all angles. I took it to be a male. I couldn't see genitalia or anything, though.

Greenwell: How tall did you estimate it was?

Titmus: I really didn't have a height estimate because there was no reference point to compare it to. If it had been standing next to a 50-gallon (227-liter) drum or something like that, it would have been easy for me to have estimated its height. Knowing what I now know, however, I think it would have been between 7 feet, 6 inches and 8 feet (2.29-2.43m) tall. And I think it would have weighed over 1,000 pounds (453 kgs). Possibly even 1,200 to 1,400 pounds (543-634 kgs). It was very big and very heavily muscled. But I just flatly refused to believe what I was looking at.

Greenwell: So, you put that whole thing out of your mind, and spent many years not even thinking about it?

Titmus: I couldn't explain it. I just wouldn't think about it.

Greenwell: When was the first time that you remember having actually heard about such a creature? Was it with the Jerry Crew episode, or had you heard rumors or reports before that?

Titmus: Oh, I had heard about it before. A number of people had come into my taxidermy shop and had asked me what these huge tracks they had seen were from. They said they looked like a giant man's track.

Greenwell: And did you then make the connection with your own sighting?

Titmus: No, I still didn't. I had been tracking Bigfoot up there on Bluff Creek for, I guess, about two months, when one night I was sitting by the campfire thinking about this thing. Then all of a sudden it dawned on me. I was wondering, you know, what in the world could be leaving tracks like this, and suddenly I thought to myself: "Well, you damned fool, you saw one of these things up in Alaska in 1942." That's when the connection came to me.

Greenwell: So what happened in the years after the Jerry Crew incident?

Titmus: Well, I kept spending every minute I could possibly steal away from my taxidermy business to go up there and track this thing. Hunting it. First, you hunt for tracks, and then you track it, to see what you learn about it. It just became an obsession with me for a couple of years.

Greenwell: How did Tom Slick become involved?

Titmus: Well, *Readers' Digest* had published an article by Tom about his Himalayan expedition to search for the Yeti. This Bigfoot-hunting thing can grow to be quite costly. Almost every trip I took up there to Bluff Creek cost me a couple of tires. The road was in awful condition. You'd sink down deep, and it was all sharp rocks, and you're tires would be spinning. I knew that we could put forth a much better effort if we could get some financial support to do it.

So we contacted Tom. He was a Texas millionaire, based in San Antonio. He came out to see us. I took him up to Bluff Creek and showed him some tracks.

Greenwell: What did he think of the tracks? Was he impressed by them?

Titmus: Oh, yes indeed. I showed him more evidence right there, in a 10-minute period, than he'd ever seen in the Himalayas, with all the money he'd spent over there on all of that. So he wanted to form an expedition right away, which we did. It was called the Pacific Northwest

Expedition. It was a pretty loose-knit, half-assed operation. All of this was in 1960.

Greenwell: Who was in it? How did it get organized?

Titmus: There was Tom, myself, and John Green. And I had already signed an agreement with a friend of mine, Ed Patrick, so Ed was in on it. And Rene Dahinden came in on it. John Green brought him into it. Unfortunately, they were friends then. There were two or three other guys also.

Greenwell: Is that when you first met John Green?

Titmus: No, I had met John when he came down to California not too long after that Jerry Crew photo was in the newspapers. He came to my shop, and that's how I got to know him.

Greenwell: So, Slick then essentially put you in charge of the expedition, or series of expeditions, and you ran them? According to what you just showed me a while ago, you had the checkbook and managed the finances, making the payments and so on.

Titmus: Yes. Of course, it was Tom's money. I was field leader at that time. Tom wanted to keep the title of leader, but for all practical purposes I ran the operation, as I was there in the field running things. Then, in late May, 1960, Tom brought Peter Byrne over from England. He'd been working for Tom over in Nepal on that Yeti thing. I had been neglecting my taxidermy business so badly because of this project that, at first, I was more than pleased to have somebody come out there and sort of take over the leadership. But as soon as I met Byrne I realized that he was not what I'd hoped for. I didn't think much of his competence, and the fact that he'd never had any hunting experience... Well, anyway, eventually I turned everything that I'd been doing over to him.

Greenwell: Did Byrne then become the official team leader?

Titmus: Yes, when I moved up here to Canada. That was about March of 1961.

Greenwell: So there was almost a year's overlap between you and Byrne? Who was in charge during that period?

Titmus: Well, Tom had failed to say explicitly who was in charge. I was still writing all the checks and so forth, and Byrne was sort of running things out there in the field. I was staying away from there as much as possible.

Greenwell: Why was that?

Titmus: I had a business to run. I was way, way behind in my work. My customers were just giving me hell, constantly.

Greenwell: And then you packed up and moved to British Columbia?

Titmus: Yes, and that was also at a time when my wife and I were getting divorced. My whole life was all messed up. Anyway, there were some very good reports coming from up here in north-central British Columbia, and Tom was getting real interested in that, through Ivan T. Sanderson. So, Tom wanted to know if I would be willing to come up to British Columbia and run a project up here.

Greenwell: Was this separate from the Pacific Northwest Expedition in California?

Titmus: Yes, it had nothing to do with that.

Greenwell: And John Green was involved in it, wasn't he?

Titmus: Yes he was.

Greenwell: Was it basically just the two of you, or was it Rene Dahinden also?

Titmus: No, no. I refused to have anything to do with Dahinden. He was such an oddball. He had no tracking or hunting experience whatsoever. He was totally out of place out in the bush, and he was a miserable person to try and get along with. I had to get rid of him twice down there on the California project. But when I got started up here, he begged and pleaded with Tom Slick, and even offered to work for free, if he could just come up and join me. And I told Tom I'd



have nothing whatsoever to do with him. And the same went for Peter Byrne. I told Tom that if either one of them came up to British Columbia, our contract would become null and void.

So, John Green spent the first month up north with me. Later, I injured my back pretty bad. I couldn't even lift the anchor on my boat, so he came up and spent a month with me at that time. This was at my headquarters on Swindle Island. This field project went on until Tom's death, when he was killed in that plane crash in October of 1962.

Greenwell: That must have been a real blow to you. You got to know him very well, didn't you?

Titmus: I thought the world of that man. Tom Slick was a wonderful person. But, of course, my financial support from him ended right then, the day he was killed. That was the end of that. I continued for another year on my own money, and then I went broke. I then settled in Kitimat, where I'd stored my car. I realized that I had to do something to create an income, so I took my last \$1,000 and bought into a taxi business that was for sale. And that's how I got into *that* damn, stupid business!

Greenwell: A taxi business? So you went from taxidermy to taxicabs...

Titmus: Yes. And I thought I'd be able to tolerate that for a couple of years, until I got financially back on my feet. But then I bought another cab, and another cab, and pretty soon I owned almost three-quarters of the company. In the meantime, I had been buying a house every now and then. At one point, I had five or six houses. I also bought quite a bit of land, in Terrace, in Smithers, in Hazelton. One piece was 640 acres (259ha). All of this was from 1963 till 1971. During that time, I pretty much abandoned my active Sasquatch hunting. The only time I did anything was when there were reports, and I would then go and check them out.

Greenwell: Only in British Columbia?

Titmus: No, also in Washington, Oregon, or California. If I thought they were worth-

while reports.

Greenwell: So when you heard of a sighting you would go out and investigate it, but you didn't go out and do your own fieldwork?

Titmus: I certainly couldn't afford to do what I had done previously, which was to spend full-time out beating the bush and hunting for tracks. Then I sold my houses, and I sold my taxicab interests, and moved over to Hazelton, where I owned a house with five acres, plus a good chunk of land of 240 acres (97ha) 17 miles (27km) outside of town. I went over there to clear that land, with the intention of building up a cattle ranch. I'd bought a couple of caterpillars. I had those cats rented out a lot, and they were bringing in some good money. I was then doing damn well.

So, for the next eight years I did nothing but clearing land for this ranch. This was from 1971 till 1978. I still checked out reports of course. Some of the few British Columbia track casts that I have were made during that period — you saw them in the other room. Some kids had found those tracks, and reported them to a prospector, who called me.

Greenwell: So what happened in the 1980's? You got much more active searching for the Sasquatch again, didn't you?

Titmus: Yes, I did. I moved down here to Harrison Hot Springs in late 1978. It's where John Green lived. In fact, this is his old house. As you know, he now lives on the next street over. I was in pretty bad shape with my back the first two or three years I was here. But by 1982 I started going back down to Bluff Creek again, as well as Washington and Oregon. I would frequently go to all three places on one trip. I'd hit Washington and Oregon first, spending a week or 10 days there, and then I'd go on to California, to Bluff Creek, and spend three months in there. I'd generally arrive there about October 1.

Greenwell: And you'd go into Bluff Creek for three months all alone?

Titmus: No. I had my dog with me.

Greenwell: What did you do exactly?

Titmus: Walk the creek, and the logging roads above it, especially if they were under construction and had loose dirt. There wasn't much construction going on by then, though.

Greenwell: I've heard that you used to cover a lot of territory in one day?

Titmus: Yes, I did. I was searching for tracks and any other evidence I might come upon. I had a very close friend down there, Newk McCall. He lived just north of Eureka, and occasionally he'd go into the mountains with me.

Greenwell: And from time to time you'd find tracks in some pretty remote areas in there, didn't you?

Titmus: From time to time, yes.

Greenwell: How remote?

Titmus: Well, it was 22 miles (35km) from the nearest blacktop road to the area of Bluff Creek were I'd go. Maybe half a mile to a mile from any logging road. Of course, I found bear tracks fairly often. There's a lot of bears in that area.

Greenwell: But you never actually saw a Sasquatch in or near Bluff Creek?

Titmus: No, I never did.

Greenwell: Just the tracks. And what did you make of those tracks? Were they similar to the ones you found in the 1950's?

Titmus: Yes. They were the very same individuals. At least in my opinion they were.

Greenwell: So there was no doubt in your mind that there was a population in there of some sort of large, unknown primate?

Titmus: At one time, it was my opinion that there was about six individuals in the Bluff Creek area. For a number of years in the 1980's, I got down there almost every year for a stay of about 3 months. When you have that much time to devote to it, you can cover the coun-

try real well.

Greenwell: And, of course, that's were the Patterson film was taken. Do you think that's authentic?

Titmus: Yes, I do.

Greenwell: Did you know Roger Patterson pretty well?

Titmus: No, not pretty well. I knew him, though.

Greenwell: Do you have any thoughts on what the Sasquatch may be? People talk about a giant ape, a fossil primate called *Gigantopithecus*.

Titmus: Well, that's what I've thought since 1958. That it might be this *Gigantopithecus* thing, still here on earth when it should have been gone hundreds of thousands of years ago.

Greenwell: Bob, the whole idea that there could be a giant primate, unknown to science but alive and well in California, just sounds, on the surface, too bizarre — even absurd. What does the existence of the Sasquatch mean to society, do you think? What do you think it boils down to?

Titmus: Well, I don't think it should mean anything to society, other than the fact that there's a very large animal out there that society hasn't recognized as existing.

Greenwell: Why do you think that is?

Titmus: Because it's simply unbelievable. So it simply doesn't exist. Any scientist will sit behind his desk and tell you that.

Greenwell: What would it take to change that?

Titmus: You bring one in, and then dump it on his damned desk. That's what it will take.

Greenwell: And what if you can't do that? Is there any other way, do you think?

Titmus: Maybe. I really think that this younger generation of scientists...you

see, they've grown up hearing about the Sasquatch ever since they can remember. But the older scientists, when they were young, they originally learned in their college textbooks all about the things that were known to exist. And the Sasquatch simply wasn't one of them. It wasn't known to scientists at all — or even talked about — earlier in the century. And no dummies who are actually in the field finding such evidence, like these hunters and trackers like myself, are going to convince them otherwise. In other words, "Don't bother me with facts, because my mind's already made up."

But things are gradually changing. I think the younger scientists will be more interested in the problem, and they'll be more willing to go out and examine the tracks that are found, for example, than the old fogies have been.

Greenwell: There was a presumption — well, there still is, actually — that the whole thing was a big hoax, so any evidence that was produced was worthless in the first place. So it's not worth their time and effort looking at it. It's sort of mindboggling, though, to think that the largest primate in the world — in fact, the largest primate that has ever lived, even in the fossil record — could be alive today, in the State of California, and not be recognized. It's mindboggling.

Titmus: Yes, it is. And I'll tell you something else that's mindboggling, Richard. If this is all a hoax...that's even harder to believe than just some damn primate existing in the State of California.

Greenwell: What would it take for all of this to be a hoax?

Titmus: It would take thousands of people, some very sophisticated equipment, and one hell of a lot of money, scattered everywhere. For over 40 years.

Greenwell: What are the odds of that? I mean, you have found many tracks in remote areas that nobody frequented. Could you be fooled? Could you have been fooled as a tracker?

Titmus: No. No, its gone way beyond that now. There isn't a chance of that any-

more. I have found very, very few fake tracks, by the way. I have found some that were misinterpreted, but that's different. That's when the people who reported them made a legitimate mistake, and they were damn sorry that they didn't recognize them for what they were, and that sort of thing.

Greenwell: Why do you think that one hasn't been hit by a truck or shot by a hunter?

Titmus: Well, my answer to that is that they're probably pretty damn good at dodging trucks.

Greenwell: Do you think they're fairly intelligent then? They have a good avoidance behavior, like dodging trucks?

Titmus: My God, they're probably aren't that many of them out there to be dodging trucks in the first place!

Greenwell: What advice can you give to the young, enthusiastic person who may want to try to do something about this, after all these decades?

Titmus: Quit sitting around and talking about it. Get out in the wilderness and search for evidence. And keep searching, and keep searching. You're not going to get one by sitting in your living room talking about it.

Greenwell: Do you think a specimen will be produced...that it will be proven, within a reasonable time?

Titmus: That's a very difficult question to answer...35 years ago, I thought it was going to happen any time. But that was 35 years ago.

Greenwell: Do you feel any sadness or bitterness that you haven't been able to bring one in and prove it?

Titmus: No, there's no need to be bitter about it.

Greenwell: Well, you put a lot of energy into it.

Titmus: So what? It was my choice.



Greenwell: You had a lot of fun doing it, I guess. Would you do it again, if you came back to earth?

Titmus: I suppose I would. Knowing me, and my very curious mind.

Greenwell: You'd do it all again?

Titmus: I imagine so.

Greenwell: I guess curiosity is the basis of it all, isn't it? Wanting to know.

Titmus: I had to satisfy my own curiosity.

Greenwell: Do you feel you have?

Titmus: To a great extent, yes. Ever since I associated the tracks that I found with that thing I saw in Alaska in 1942, and later on — some 20 years later — seeing three more of them.

Greenwell: The three you saw climbing that cliff?

Titmus: Yes.

Greenwell: So, in a personal way, you're convinced then? The evidence is good enough for you because you found their tracks, and you even saw them — I suppose it's less important for you to try to convince all those fuddy professors.

Titmus: Oh, I couldn't care less about them. That doesn't mean a thing to me.

Greenwell: You're satisfied in your own mind?

Titmus: Yes. I'm content. □

## BOB TITMUS, 1918-1997

*We regret to announce the death of Bob Titmus, one of the very early Sasquatch/Bigfoot investigators and an Honorary Member of the Society. The following obituary was written by his long-time friend and associate John Green.*

Bob Titmus, a key figure in Sasquatch/Bigfoot investigations for almost 40 years, died on July 1, 1997, following a heart attack a few days before at his home in Harrison Hot Springs. He was 78.

Bob served in the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II, and was injured during warship combat in the Pacific Theater. From his youth in California, he was an expert hunter and tracker, and he also became an expert taxidermist. These skills he applied throughout his life to the search for the Sasquatch.

Not widely known to the public at large because he had never sought publicity, Bob contributed more solid evidence for the existence of this primate than any other individual, and he possessed the most extensive collection of original footprint casts, most of them from tracks he himself had found.

When the public debut of the Bigfoot occurred in Northern California in October of 1958, Bob had a taxidermy shop near Redding. It was he who supplied his old friend Jerry Crew with the plaster and casting instructions that enabled Crew to make his famous cast of one of the 16-inch tracks that kept showing up around

his bulldozer on a dirt road then being built through the Bluff Creek valley for the U.S. Forest Service.

A few weeks later, Bob and a friend, Ed Patrick, dispelled the notion that the Bigfoot was a single individual by finding, and casting, distinctly different 15-inch tracks on a sandbar on Bluff Creek. Those tracks were not in soft dirt like those on the logging road, but in hard-packed, wet sand, yet they averaged 1 inch in depth, making it impossible to dismiss them as being easy to fake. Those casts, and the ones he made a year later on the same sandbar, are still some of the best ever obtained anywhere.

Bob was one of the group who brought millionaire Tom Slick into the Bigfoot investigation in 1959, and he was the original field leader of the Slick-financed Pacific Northwest Expedition in California. Later, in the early 1960's, and again with Slick's backing, he shifted his search to a new area, on the central British Columbia coast.

Bob's move to British Columbia proved to be permanent, and he eventually became a Canadian citizen. He spent several years operating from a boat among the islands and inlets between Bella Coola and Prince Rupert, and he found Sasquatch tracks on several beaches there. One such find involved a fresh set of tracks coming out of the water and into the woods on a small island. The trackmaker could only have reached this

island by swimming through a storm-whipped sea.

After Tom Slick's death in 1962, Bob continued the search in British Columbia until he ran out of funds. He then started a taxicab business in Kitimat so that he could continue searching along the coastal streams and beaches on a part-time basis. Unfortunately, all of the Canadian casts he made during that period were lost when his boat was destroyed by fire. However, in 1977, while he was clearing a homestead near Hazelton, he was notified that some boys had found tracks close to the Skeena River, at Terrace, and he was able to get two superb casts of 15-inch tracks there.

In October of 1967, when Roger Patterson and Bob Gimlin claimed to have filmed a female Bigfoot at Bluff Creek, Bob attended the first public showing of the now-famous film in Vancouver, and then drove down to California, where he made casts of eight tracks at the film site. He was the first outside investigator to go there, and what he found left him totally convinced that the movie was genuine.

Although most of Bob's investigations continued to be in British Columbia, over the years he would often return to Bluff Creek for a few months in the fall. He was successful in finding tracks there several more times, once getting casts of both knee and hand prints.

During his last search along the sand-

bars of Bluff Creek, in the late 1980's, he was again able to cast several tracks, but it was getting dark, and he did not attempt to take the casts out at the time. He left them buried under a tree at the Patterson film site, and he never returned there. If anybody can find the right tree, the casts may still be there!

As a life-long hunter, Bob was firmly in the camp of those who considered the Sasquatch to be an ordinary animal. Although he hunted it with a gun in order to collect a specimen for science, he was disappointed in never having had the opportunity to shoot one. He did, however, have two personal sightings. The first concerned an entity he saw on the shore of Wrangel Narrows, Alaska, when he was on a ship heading north to a construction site in 1942. Without a context to place it into, he rejected the sighting at the time as a probable hallucination. The second

sighting took place in the early 1960's during his search by boat along the British Columbia coast, when he observed, from a distance, three unidentifiable bipedal figures scaling a cliff.

Another disappointment for him concerned some brown hairs that he had collected from bushes and tree branches near Bluff Creek while following an apparent Sasquatch trail. Years later, it became possible to identify such hairs, through immunological response analysis, as coming from a higher primate. The scientist who conducted the analysis limited the possibilities to human, gorilla, and chimpanzee. As an experienced taxidermist, Bob felt sure that the hairs could not have come from any of those three. That could easily have been established by a microscopic analysis, but the immunological analysis had already totally consumed the hair samples.

Because of a 1962 back injury, Bob lived in constant, severe pain for more than 30 years, but he continued his searches until the last few years of his life, when other health problems limited his activities. His last trips to Bluff Creek were in 1994 and 1996, but by then he was unable to walk very far.

In 1987, Bob's quiet, methodical work was recognized by the International Society of Cryptozoology, which elected him an Honorary Member. Bob Titmus was a modest, down-to-earth, straight-talking, no-nonsense outdoorsman. He was honest to the core, and he had little patience with charlatans, glory- or fortune-seekers, or journalists. His kind is still needed, and he will be sorely missed.

John Green  
Harrison Hot Springs  
British Columbia, Canada

## EDITORIAL

# A LAST FAREWELL TO BLUFF CREEK

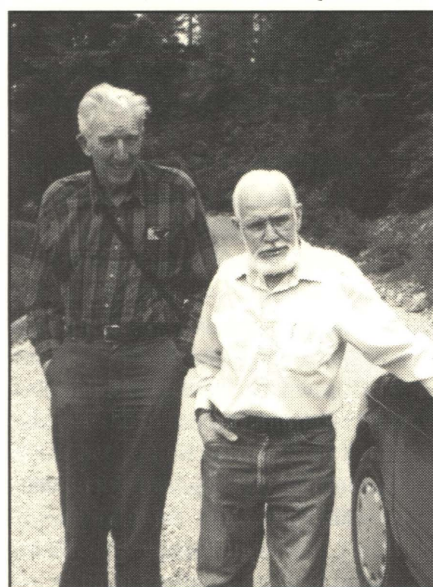
Bluff Creek. The name resonates throughout the Bigfoot literature, and for the cognoscenti it has a particular relevance. It was there, on a small stretch of that Northern California creek, that, on October 20, 1967, Roger Patterson and Bob Gimlin filmed an entity looking very much like what thousands of other witnesses say they have seen: a Bigfoot, a.k.a. Sasquatch.

But this story takes place almost 30 years later, on June 27, 1996. We were driving north on an abandoned logging road in the Six Rivers National Forest. To our immediate right was a steep, forested drop descending all the way down to a narrow canyon floor. And in that canyon floor was Bluff Creek.

We were in two vehicles, one a four-wheel drive job rented by a German television film crew, the other Bob Titmus's car. The plan was to reach the Patterson site. The Germans wanted to film part of their documentary at that spot, and Bob Titmus, the most experienced field Sasquatch tracker ever, and John Green, the premiere chronicler of Sasquatch evidence, had driven down together from British Columbia to join us. Because of

poor health, Bob, then 77, had not been to the Patterson site for years. John had not been there for decades, but he had volunteered to lead us to the spot.

The road was bad, with jagged rocks jutting menacingly upwards. It finally happened: a horrible scraping sound, followed by gasoline dribbling out of the fuel tank under Bob's car. "Quick," said



John Green (left) and Bob Titmus on the road to Bluff Creek.

Bob, "everybody give me all their chewing-gum." With no real Americans present — three of us were German, one (myself) a Brit, and Bob and John Canadian — I doubted that any chewing-gum would be readily had. But somehow several sticks materialized, and Bob had the leak temporarily fixed in no time. He may have once renounced his American citizenship, but he still had that spark of American ingenuity.

Soon after that mishap we reached a dead end: a U.S. Forest Service embankment. This meant we had to continue on foot. The departure was painful for me. There was Bob Titmus, the one man who had repeatedly explored every mile of this vast, rugged wilderness since the 1950's, and now he couldn't walk for more than a few minutes. The plan was for Bob to stay behind with the vehicles — our base camp. With much guilt, I left him with a handshake and a wave.

After about an hour of hiking the road, or what we thought was *probably* the road, we descended down a small creek towards the canyon bottom. This creek certainly made our steep descent easier. Even so, the brushy overgrowth, the slip-



pery rocks, and the mossy ledges made it difficult going, resulting in numerous falls.

There were some stunning, primordial-looking sights in that lush, enclosed, and thickly-vegetated corridor, and it felt like we would surely encounter a Bigfoot at any moment. We didn't, but after about an hour we reached the bottom and stood looking at Bluff Creek. Not the Bluff Creek further south that can be reached easily by car — and that eventually drains into the mighty Klamath River — but the Bluff Creek of Bigfoot lore.

It was as beautiful as I had imagined it. Slow-moving, with overhanging trees and bushes. Remote and mysterious. After resting, John and I scouted northwards for an hour looking for the site. There were few sandbars. Where one could walk at all, it was mainly on small rocks — millions of them. Then there were the giant rocks, the fallen trees, and many other obstructions. When we had to cross the creek, we chose the shallowest points; these ranged from about 1 to 3 feet (30-90cm) in depth.

Finally, after consulting his map, John announced that we had reached the site — an unusually straight section of the creek going directly northward. So this is where it had happened. In a way, it was disappointing. The open, sandy landscape visible in the film — the result of a big flood in 1964 — is now gone. The area over which that supposed female Bigfoot strode is now grassy, and enclosed by birch trees. It's still flat, but it was quite different and unrecognizable, even to John.

We headed back to get the film crew. I meandered, leisurely looking for animal tracks and enjoying the creek's serene beauty. About two thirds of the way back, with John now out of sight, I slipped on a rock. I reeled around to catch my balance, fell on a pointed rock, gashed my leg, and went into the water — camera and all. I was baptized by Bluff Creek, that's for sure. The water was freezing. I climbed out as quickly as possible, limping on a bloody leg, and drenched to the skin. As I sat on a rock waiting for the others to return, I must have looked like a wet rat.

After arriving at the Patterson site, the Germans filmed what they needed, with the director stressed out — as all film directors usually are — over things like dropping suns and lengthening shadows. It was 5 p.m. now. Time to head back if we were to reach the cars before night-fall.

John had proposed a different return route: climbing the mountain directly behind the Patterson site up to the old logging road. It would be tough going, but, once we reached the road, it would be a relatively easy trek back to the cars. We started up. It was fine at first, but it got more and more difficult, more and more strenuous, and, finally, more and more impossible. I know the latter isn't grammatically correct, but it best reflects our feelings at the time.

As the brush got thicker, we realized that this was an old logging clear-cut, a former coniferous area that, with the big trees gone, had suffered an invasion by smaller trees and bushes. And "invasion" is really the right word. In particular, there was one kind of "tree," from Venus I believe, that had long tentacle-like branches that would droop down to the steeply-inclined ground. These branches were too high to climb over, and too low to climb under; we had to climb *through* them, with backpacks and camera equipment getting continually snagged — and somehow I had ended up with the really bulky and heavy tripod for the film crew's industrial Betacam video camera. I never did learn what kind of tree that was, and, frankly, I don't want to know.

There were times when we were literally stuck in this tangled mess, practically unable to move except for an elbow here or a leg there. My injured leg still hurt, but every other inch of my body hurt even more from the exertion. There was talk of abandoning the climb and heading back down to the creek, but I invoked Queen Victoria, who once had said that the word "defeat" was not to be found in the English vocabulary. We were already about half-way up the mountain, and I couldn't bear the thought of having expended two excruciating hours on this climb through a Venusian hell all for naught.

Well, it got even worse. Finally, reluctantly, we had no option but to accept the fact that we had taken a very bad route, and that it was now best to abandon the ascent, cut our losses, and head back down. Already exhausted, we found that the descent was not much easier than the ascent, for now we had to fight the undergrowth and gravity in a different sort of way to avoid stumbling and rolling down the mountainside. We reached the bottom by about 7:30 p.m. John Green later told me that, in all of his 40 years of searching for the Sasquatch, he had never before found himself in such dense, unrelenting vegetation.

With only about two hours of light left, it was now too late to climb the mountain at all, even up that small-creek route we had originally come down on. Instead, we decided to head straight south, staying in the creek-bed all the way to the bridge at Louse Camp. Once there, we could link up with the logging road again, and hike northwards to the cars. With the creek's twists and turns, the bridge was about 4, maybe 5 miles (6.5-8km) downstream, which would take several hours in this kind of terrain. John wasn't sure how many hours. Bob had once told me that trekking between the bridge and the Patterson site requires 18 crossings of the creek. And much of this would now have to be done in darkness.

The going was both rough and slow. But however many rocks we slipped on, or enormous fallen trees we had to climb over, I far preferred this to climbing that Venusian hill from hell. By now we had run out of water. Unlike some, I wouldn't drink the creek water, which sometimes has parasitic contamination. (My caution had kept me healthy in South America for 6 years.) So I was getting increasingly thirsty.

The other problem was that we were quite unprepared for night trekking. Fortunately, when it got dark at 9:30, one of the Germans produced a small Mag flashlight from their video equipment. I requisitioned this, and for the first hour or so I placed myself in the middle of the group, shinning it alternatively ahead and behind me to assist everyone. That worked fine until, at one point, during a creek



crossing, the flashlight left my hands — never to return.

Within minutes, the Germans had moved rapidly ahead with it, followed by John. With my bad leg, I couldn't keep up. I soon found myself alone, in the dark, in a creek canyon I didn't know, hungry, thirsty, with a bad leg, and in still-wet clothes made colder by the cool night air. I cursed myself for having told the Germans an untrue story, joker that I am, about how black bears always descend to the creeks right after dark to eat whatever happens to be there. Well, I was now paying the price of my own mischief. And it could get worse. The bears might even come! And as this had been planned as a brief, one-day excursion, I was unarmed.

Fortunately, there was some moonlight, so I was able to carefully edge my way along canyon walls feeling my way by hand, tentatively cross the creek testing the bottom with my boots, and cautiously move through thick vegetation protecting myself with my arms. After more than an hour of this, an amazing thing happened. Not 15 feet (4.5m) ahead

of me, in a small clearing overlooking the creek, I suddenly perceived the silhouette of a tall figure silently loom up in the moonlight. A bear? Perhaps. A Bigfoot? Maybe. I froze, waiting for something to happen. It did. A deafening roar bellowed into my ears: "RICHARD!!!" It was John Green, who, concerned over my absence, had returned to search for me. So the world wasn't such a cruel place after all.

We rejoined the others, and soon afterwards one of the Germans, who happened to glance upwards, said: "What's that?" We looked up, and some of the stars seemed mysteriously blocked. It was the bridge. As we followed the logging road north back to the cars, at about midnight, I thought about poor Bob Titmus, who'd been waiting and worrying about us for over 12 hours.

I remember going up to Bob and asking him, with a parched, English understatement: "Bob, you wouldn't happen to have just a little left-over water, would you?" He glared at me with that reproachful look he often had, and said:

"Would you settle for a can of Coke?" A Coke was more than I could possibly have imagined at that point. I followed him around to the trunk of his car. As he opened it, he glared at me once more, and with a stern voice added: "I suppose you'll be wanting it cold, too?"

Yes, gentlepersons, he actually had an ice-chest in his trunk, and for the next hour I savored those cold Cokes as the two of us wound our way through those mountain curves back down to the Klamath River.

That was Bob's final farewell to his beloved Bluff Creek, even though he wasn't actually able to get down to the creek itself. He died a year later. Although he never did see a Bigfoot in there, he'd found enough tracks over the decades to be convinced that a population of about six of them had at one time lived in that drainage system.

I've been back to Bluff Creek since this adventure. And when I'm there, I always think of Bob. □

## EASTERN PUMA OFFICIALLY ACKNOWLEDGED IN CANADA

The news never made it into the U.S. press. It wasn't even a front page story in most Canadian newspapers. However, a remarkable event occurred in the eastern Canadian province of New Brunswick in March of 1993: the puma, *Puma* (= *Felis*) *concolor*, was officially acknowledged as existing in that province.

Also known as the cougar, panther, and mountain lion, the puma has been thought extinct in the Eastern U.S.A. and Canada for most of the 20th century. Two subspecies have been recognized in the East: the Eastern puma, *P. c. cougar*, which ranged from New Brunswick to the Carolinas and west to Illinois; and the Southern puma, *P. c. coryi*, which ranged from Florida to Arkansas.

The Eastern puma has long been considered extinct by all American state wild-

life agencies and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, although dozens of eyewitness reports are made in almost all Eastern states every year. Some reports include descriptions of juveniles, implying breeding populations.

The Southern puma is thought extinct everywhere except for a few dozen survivors in some specific Florida locations, where it is called the Florida panther. (These animals seem to have genetic mixture with other puma races, presumably the result of breeding with released or escaped individuals.) Many eyewitness sighting reports come from other parts of Florida, as well as from other Southern states, but such reports are generally dismissed by state wildlife agencies as misidentifications.

To add to the confusion, about a third of all reports in the East and South in-

volve descriptions of melanistic (black) individuals. Black pumas are not recognized by zoology, as there are no known specimens or unambiguous photos of such felids. A more detailed review of the history of, and evidence for, pumas in the East may be found in *The ISC Newsletter*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (1989).

The first serious evaluation of Eastern puma reports was made by Canadian wildlife biologist Bruce Wright, director of the Northeastern Wildlife Station of the University of New Brunswick. Sighting reports from the late 1930's sparked his interest, but he was unable to pursue the matter until after World War II. His investigations continued until his death in the early 1970's, and he was convinced that the Eastern puma had never become extinct at all, but had persisted in cryptic, remnant populations in New Brunswick, and probably elsewhere. Unfortunately,



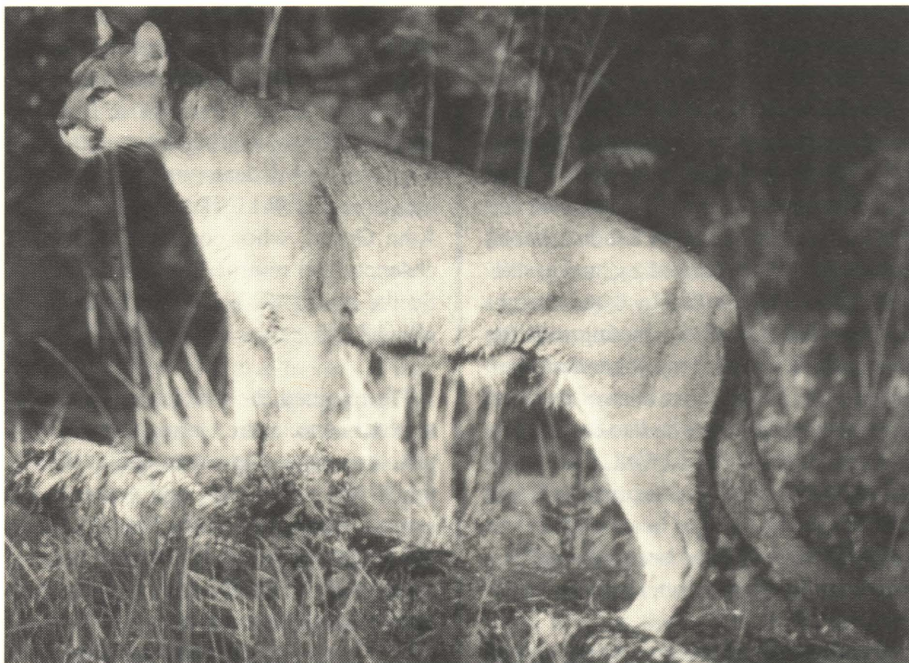
he was never able to convince his fellow zoologists or New Brunswick provincial officials.

It took over 50 years after Wright's initial interest for the situation to change. On March 1, 1993, the New Brunswick Minister of Natural Resources, Alan Graham, officially acknowledged the presence of a puma population in that province. The announcement, which came as a complete surprise, was the result of an examination of new tracks, and the analysis of an associated fecal sample which produced undisputable puma hairs. "We always had sightings," said Minister Graham, "but it was always just hearsay or word of mouth. Now we have proof...There are cougars in the province. Not many, mind you, but they're definitely there."

The details of the circumstances involved is contained in the report "Evidence of the Eastern Cougar in New Brunswick," by Rod Cumberland, a wildlife biologist with the Fish and Wildlife Branch of the New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources and Energy. The report describes the finding, on November 18, 1992, of large tracks in snow near Juniper, in western New Brunswick, by Tom O'Brien, an employee of Irving Woodlands.

The information was rapidly relayed through official channels, and two provincial biologists, Cumberland and Jeff Dempsey, were sent to inspect the tracks. The next day, they proceeded along Deersdale Road to Road "Q" — on the border between Wildlife Management Zones 11 and 12 — and the reported tracks were located and inspected.

Many tracks were found, some on the ground and some on logs. All were clearly puma-like. The largest track measured 4.1 inches (10.5cm) in width and 3.9 inches (10cm) in length, although a splayed track on a log measured 6 inches (15.3cm) in width and 4 inches (10.2cm) in length. At one point, the trackmaker had stepped over a branch some 15.7 inches (40cm) high on a fallen log; no sign that the animal had jumped was apparent, indicating a large stature. One jump was measured at 17 feet, 3 inches (5.25m), and it went



*The puma, Puma concolor (Tom Brakefield/Mountain Lion Foundation.)*

over tree saplings 40 inches (1m) high without disturbing the snow on them. The longest stride was measured 55 inches (140cm). The average stride was nearly 44 inches (112cm), double the typical bobcat or lynx stride.

The most important evidence, however, turned out to be a fecal sample collected near the tracks. The report states that its location "in relation to the tracks, its age, position on top of the snow and lack of association with any other tracks confirmed it was from this animal."

The fecal sample was sent for analysis to the Canadian Museum of Nature (formerly the National Museum of Natural Sciences), in Ottawa. On February 16, 1993, C.G. van Zyll de Jong, of the Museum's Zoology Division, relayed the results of the analysis in written form to the Department of Natural Resources. Most of the fecal sample contained the remains of consumed prey, specifically snowshoe hare, *Lepus americanus*. "In addition," the communication stated, "there were hairs, foot and leg hairs, from a cougar. The latter were, presumably, ingested during grooming after feeding. There is, thus, little doubt that the scat was produced by a cougar."

The definitive conclusion that a puma was involved, after decades of eyewitness

testimony, official denials, and rumor and speculation, read as follows: "The positive identifications were arrived at through comparisons of hair sampled from the scat with known reference hairs, with respect to a number of characteristics, such as pigmentation, overall appearance, shape, length and width dimensions, cuticular scale patterns, and the nature of the medulla. All other possible candidates that could have produced a similar scat were eliminated by this process."

This finding led the New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources to change its long-standing policy on the matter, and to acknowledge the presence of a puma population in the province, as officially announced by Minister Graham two weeks later.

The announcement was, of course, a long-overdue vindication of Bruce Wright, as well as of many eyewitnesses whose testimony had been shrouded in doubt. "I feel vindicated, totally vindicated," said one witness, Doug Harrison, to the Canadian Press. "There have been a lot of us who have seen them, and seen tracks, but for the most part we were regarded with a pretty jaundiced eye, especially by city dwellers."

In fact, Harrison had originally kept his



sighting secret, but it was eventually divulged to a reporter by a relative. Some years before, Harrison had seen a puma frolicking in a field by his home outside of Fredericton. It so happened that he was running for a provincial seat as a Liberal at the time, and he was concerned that any publicity surrounding his sighting might damage his reputation, and thus his election chances. "I figured people would think I was nuts," he said. After his sighting was publicly revealed, many rural residents supported his candidacy even more, having had their own puma sightings over the years which they had kept to themselves. He subsequently won the election.

The lessons to be learned from all of this are twofold. First, sometimes eyewitnesses *are* right about what they think they saw. Zoologists generally dismiss anomalous reports involving eyewitness testimony, considering such evidence unreliable — and thus scientifically worthless. While it is quite appropriate to treat such anecdotal information with skepticism and caution, there are instances — such as with the Eastern puma, which has been supported by a vast amount of consistent eyewitness testimony — in which dismissing such anecdotal evidence out of hand is unproductive, and may even lead to our remaining ignorant of important zoological facts. The purpose of cryptozoology, of course, is to tread that middle ground; to determine if such anecdotal evidence rises to the level of possibly representing new zoological information.

The other lesson does not concern human eyewitnesses at all, but the animals themselves. Where do we go wrong in assuming — indeed, declaring — that such-and-such a species is extinct, when, in fact, it may persist unknown to zoology or officialdom? How many times do

we try to dictate to Nature by categorically stating, despite extensive eyewitness testimony to the contrary, that such-and-such a species "could not possibly have survived," that its presence today is impossible," or that the chances of it existing are "a million to one"?

Obviously, if such species exist unverified by zoology, the animals themselves are simply applying their evolutionarily or behaviorally acquired skills to remain in that cryptic state. They themselves are not aware that they are not supposed to exist! It is only our arrogance that defines them as such.

Now, some debunkers will no doubt point out that a puma is not a Bigfoot. That this discovery is interesting, but hardly as "dramatic" as proving the existence of, for example, the Bigfoot. One could answer this point in two ways. First, the new puma evidence, which the Province of New Brunswick found convincing, is similar to the evidence which has also been produced for the Bigfoot (tracks and hairs), which zoologists and official agencies do *not* find convincing.

Second, the intensity of the "drama" of discovering a new taxon — or a thought-extinct taxon — is a social or subjective factor, not a zoological or objective one. Thus, one may well be left wondering what the distinction really is in terms of the strictly objective methodology of science, particularly when — as with the Bigfoot — no puma specimen has actually been produced.

There is another interesting point too. If one peruses the lists of cryptozoological animals, one finds a disproportionate number of cryptids associated with the orders Carnivora and Primates, whose representatives are almost certainly the most "intelligent" in the

Animal Kingdom. Is it just coincidental that this is so? Or are carnivore and primate species simply better at hiding from us — and thus providing more cryptozoological representatives — than are species in other orders?

Now that it's official, that the Eastern puma does exist — although the official acknowledgment side-stepped the question of whether the population involved represents the original Eastern race, *P. c. cougar* — another very peculiar situation arises.

American state wildlife agencies and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service continue to regard the Eastern puma as extinct, irrespective of what official pronouncements may be made in New Brunswick, a province in another country. What this means in practical terms is that a New Brunswick puma, which now officially exists, ceases to exist the moment it crosses the border into Maine — where there have also been numerous puma reports — and steps on U.S. soil! As none of the state or federal agencies in the U.S. have been moved to alter their positions following the New Brunswick announcement, this curious situation may prevail for many years to come.

Meanwhile, cryptozoology may place another checkmark by a cryptid's name — at least on the Canadian side of the border! — and set its sights on the many other still-unresolved cryptozoological enigmas. □

## QUOTE

"Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."

Arthur C. Clarke  
British science and science fiction writer

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